

How to Hunt Your Kin, Or, First Steps in Genealogy Research

Genealogy can become discouraging and overwhelming unless you break it into steps. **Focus on one family or surname at a time.** In looking for your own sixteen great-great grandparents or even your eight great grandparents, you will learn about many, many families!

Here are some steps to get you started:

1. **Begin with what you know.** Use an ancestry, or pedigree, chart to record the family information you already know. You want full names, dates for births, marriages, and deaths, and locations for these events. From the blanks on this chart, you will see where you need to begin. Sample forms are kept in the Genealogy Information binder located on top of the black microfilm cabinets. Many genealogy websites will also have basic forms you can print out. One of those is www.genealogysearch.org/forms.html.
2. **Talk with family members.** You may be surprised at how many of your relatives have already done some genealogical research. Their stories, photos, and other documents may give clues to other information sources and help fill in those blanks on your chart.
3. **Organize what you've collected.** Genealogy can soon overwhelm your house with an avalanche of paper. Try to stay organized from the beginning. Use ancestral charts and family group sheets as basic tools. A family group sheet can be used to record essential information about each family unit in a compact manner.

For more information on beginning and organizing your genealogy, look at the following books and the library's genealogy resources web pages under "Genealogy How-to."

Unpuzzling your past 929.1072073 CRO

Family History 101 929.1072073 MEL

The Researcher's guide to American genealogy GEN 929.1072073 GRE

4. **Survey completed research.** This step can help you to take advantage of other people's research. You will have to verify their sources, but their work may open up new avenues for your own research.
 - i. Begin with the Internet site www.familysearch.org and search **both** the "Search for Ancestors" area and the "Family History Library Catalog." Use the catalog to find microfilm on your family or locale. Borrow this microfilm from your nearest Family History Center.
 - ii. Check the US Genweb Project at <http://usgenweb.org/> and Roots-L at www.rootsweb.com/roots-l/ for both your family and locale. Search the query sections. Rootsweb also has family trees you can search through.
 - iii. Search through the online message boards and mailing lists like those at www.genforum.genealogy.com and at www.rootsweb.com.
 - iv. Check the Periodical Source Index, PERSI. The library has PERSI on CD and online on *HeritageQuest Online*. PERSI indexes many genealogical periodicals by surname, locality, and title, and

subject. PERSI also mentions which large collections carry that title. The library has a growing collection of genealogical periodicals to search through.

v. Search the 5 volume set of *Genealogies in the Library of Congress* located at GEN 929.1 LIB.

vi. Many, many items such as local histories, published and unpublished vital records, genealogies, directories, gazetteers, and biographical works are available in full-text images from *HeritageQuest Online*. This database of over 25,000 works is available on all networked library computers and from home for remote patron access with a Round Rock Public Library card. Go to the library's website, choose "Databases & Websites," then choose "Databases by Category" and select "Genealogy." From home, you will be asked for your card number and then sent to the *HeritageQuest Online* home page.

This will undoubtedly fill in some blanks on your charts but create other gaps. From those gaps, decide which types of records will most likely have the information you seek. The "Records Selection Table" at www.familychronicle.com/records.html might help you decide what records would produce your desired result.

5. **Find and search the records.** You will want copies of birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, military records, deeds, etc. These types of records are the primary sources for proving your family was here or did that. To begin with, look at books like *Ancestry's Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources* located at GEN 929.1072073 ANC or *The Handybook for Genealogists* at GEN 929.1072 EVE for courthouse addresses and what records each may have. There are many printed, CD-ROM, and online indexes to records available. Consult the sources mentioned previously, including the library catalog. If the Round Rock Public Library System does not have the resources for your search, there are several options:

i. **Interlibrary loan.** While most libraries do not loan out genealogical materials, two options are the National Genealogical Society's circulating Local History & Genealogy Collection at the St. Louis County Library (<http://www.slcl.org/branches/hq/sc/>) and Mid-Continent Public Library's circulating genealogy collection (<http://www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/genlh/>)

Interlibrary loan is a good option if you want copies of articles or a copy of the index or table of contents to a work. This is also a good option for borrowing microfilm from other libraries and historical societies. Make interlibrary loan requests at the reference desk. You must have a Round Rock Public Library card to use this service.

ii. **Check the WorldCat database** either at the Round Rock Public Library or from home, for cardholders, through the library's website. See which libraries own the titles you are interested in. Perhaps a library nearby has the title.

iii. **Contact the library and/or the genealogy society in the place you are interested in.** You may be able to find someone who, for free or a fee, may search the records and send you copies of what they have found.

iv. **Purchase the materials yourself.** Search rare and used book websites like:

- Alibris: www.alibris.com
- Abebooks: www.abebooks.com
- Addall: www.addall.com
- Bibliofind: www.bibliofind.com

v. **Check the collections of other local libraries.** Not everything is in WorldCat, so also search for the library catalog of the place you are searching and of larger genealogy collections near you and near your place of interest.

6. **Get the record.** Once you have located where an event happened, make sure you get a copy of the document itself and not just a printout or the abstracted page from a periodical. You can get the appropriate birth, death, marriage, or divorce record request forms from the book, *International Vital Records Handbook* GEN 929.373 KEM and from www.vitalrec.com/. Verify the cost before you send your request.

7. **Record and document the information you have learned on your charts and begin the process again for another ancestor.**

Just as important as focus is **documentation**. Even if you believe that what you are doing is just for yourself and no one else, correct source documentation will help you know exactly where you found a particular piece of information. In genealogy, you always have to retrace steps, yours and others. Make it easier by using correct documentation. Consult *Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian*, by Elizabeth S. Mills, for correct formats. It is located in the Genealogy Collection on the second floor of the Griffith Library Building at GEN 929.1 MIL.

Genealogy is fun, exciting, and rewarding, but it also requires a lot of research, patience, and dedication. People have spent decades searching for an ancestor. Do you need ideas to jump-start a stalled search or need some genealogical reference help? Feel free to ask any of the reference librarians for assistance.

For information about the library's collection, consult our *Genealogy & Local History at the Round Rock Public Library* brochure or visit the library's genealogy website.

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or
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